

Identity in the Fiction of the "Presença" Generation: José Régio's "Jogo da Cabra Cega"

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IDENTITY IN THE FICTION OF THE *PRESENÇA* GENERATION: JOSÉ RÉGIO'S *JOGO DA CABRA CEGA*

AN image of fragmentation brings to a close *Jogo da Cabra Cega*, José Régio's (1901-1969) first novel, published in 1934. Concerned with identity as its title immediately makes clear, the novel chronicles the painful disintegration of its tortured narrator, Pedro Serra. Having suffered what could be termed a nervous breakdown by novel's end, Serra takes leave of Sombra, a member of his group of friends, before returning home with his mother:

– Sempre gostei da tua simplicidade natural... sempre! O seu rubor desapareceu tão intempestivamente como viera. Ele sorria, decerto sem saber que sorria. E na sua atrapalhão, enquanto apertávamos a mão um do outro, o Sombra arrastou com a manga do casaco a chávena que tinha à borda da mesa. A chávena escacou-se no chão de mosaico. (434-435)

The image of fragmentation invoked by the cup breaking into shards over the mosaic floor recalls a well-known poem by Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), "Apontamento," written in 1929. The poem begins as follows:

A minha alma partiu-se como um vaso vazio.
Caiu pela escada excessivamente abaixo.
Caiu das mãos da criada descuidada.
Caiu, fez-se em mais pedaços do que havia loiça no vaso.

(Pessoa, 378)

Although identity is at issue in both instances, much distinguishes the posture of Pessoa from that of Régio. In "Presença ou a contra-revolução do modernismo Português" Eduardo Lourenço examines the difference between *Orpheu* and *Presença*, the literary movements represented by these two writers respectively, precisely as it relates to the question of identity. The thrust of Lourenço's argument is twofold. First, he is, as it were, "rescuing" Pessoa and Mário de Sá-Carneiro (1890-1916) from what he perceives as the "reductive" psychological reading of *Orpheu* so frequently offered by writers of the *Presença*. Indeed, these writers (Régio and, particularly, João Gaspar Simões), are textbook examples of Harold Bloom's contention of the strategic misreading of one's precedent "master" text (Bloom, 1975, 1980). Thus, *Presença* "misreads" Pessoa but does so precisely in the psychological terms most favorable to its own enterprise. One need only to recall here Gaspar Simões's well known biography of Pessoa (Simões, 1950), and its explicit "psychological" interpretations or to reflect on the distance between, for instance, Pessoa's "Lisbon Revisited (1923)" (356-357) or his "Não: devagar" (395) and Régio's "Cântico

Negro" (Régio, *Poemas*, 55-59). Second, and of more interest for my purposes, Lourenço is demonstrating that if identity is problematized in texts of both movements, it is nevertheless in substantially distinct manners. To read Pessoa or Sá-Carneiro in psychological terms is, Lourenço would argue, to miss the point. The critic would instead suggest that the works of the *Presencistas* would not only *not* be betrayed by a psychological reading, but that those texts invite such an approach: "Presta[m]-se melhor a uma exegese psicológica" (Lourenço, 170). And so they do.

Beneath whatever turbulence it might chronicle, *Presença* takes for granted the possibility of stable identity, a bedrock of personality and of character. The drama is always a personal one. Characters in the novels of *Presença* are understood on the basis of their "biography." Note, for instance, the importance given to the effects of childhood experience as structuring subsequent character development in the first two novels published by *Presença*, *Éloi* by João Gaspar Simões and *Jogo*. In addition, these experiences are most easily addressed by a critic in psychological terms (e.g. the Oedipal triangle, for instance, that surfaces in the relationships of both *Éloi* and *Serra*). Such a psychological reading in the case of *Orpheu* would be reductive. Behind the mask there is only another mask or, more dizzying still, emptiness. "Assim, Sá-Carneiro e Pessoa não nos falam deles, a título *pessoal*, mas só e sempre dessa ôntica distância que lhes devora a substância e os impede de se tocarem e tocarem o mundo." (Lourenço, 177) Thus, Lourenço opposes *Presença*'s "psicologismo" to *Orpheu*'s "aventura ontológica negativa." (Lourenço, 169)

With these distinctions in mind, my purpose in this paper is not to offer a comprehensive reading of *Jogo* but to examine the issue of identity through the prism of three elements in the novel: sincerity, irony and alterity. Finally, I propose to indicate the similarity of certain structural characteristics of *Jogo* in other novels by *Presencistas*.

Jogo opens with *Serra* describing his frequent nocturnal wanderings through the city brought on by his need to exhaust himself and thus be rid of unspecified, private demons:

Eu andava então horas e horas entregue a uma espécie de devassidão – não acho outra palavra – durante a qual *vivía*, por assim dizer, todo o meu passado e todo o meu futuro. Depois de ter corrido a cidade, recomeçava. (10)

On the particular night that opens the novel *Serra* recounts how, after having walked through the city, he entered a cafe. Unlike other occasions, however this time he is unable to forget himself: "Mas hoje, não *agarrava* o sonho. A minha imaginação revelava-se impotente: a minha tortura demasiado real" (13). He senses himself being observed and indeed sees across the room a stranger whom he at first disdains but with whom he eventually suspects he shares "subterrâneas aproximações" (4). The next day he is told by his friends that they too have met an unusual man, Jaime Franco, whom they plan to see again that evening. *Serra* immediately intuitively feels that the man is none other than the stranger from the previous evening. The novel goes on to chronicle *Serra*'s transformation through his interactions with Franco. After a drunken bout

with Franco, Serra begins to behave strangely, erratically. His relationship with his friends grows increasingly polemical. Their exchanges bristle with subterfuges, with repressed rancor, with animosity though disguised by a “*postiga amabilidade*” (360). As if under some spell, he sexually attacks his landlady, a mother-like figure. Surprised by her amorous response, he is forced to confront his own incestuous feelings and reacts by humiliating her. Later, against the strict rules of the house, he ensconces himself in his room with Franco’s girlfriend. After a final violent, somewhat hysterical confrontation with his friends, having burned every bridge behind him he is broken (like the cup that shatters on the mosaic floor), and by the novel’s end is being taken back home by his mother.

A precarious sense of self caused by his inability to feel authentic and whole marks the narrator from the start. What is truly the self, what is posturing, are questions Serra struggles with and cannot answer. It is interesting that in the novel’s first paragraph he projects this sense of uncertain identity onto the houses he passes, when he notes the “*aspecto de mascaradas, ou desmascaradas, que certas casas têm a certas horas*” (9). How revealing of, ultimately, Serra’s *own* dilemma is the fact that he cannot here decide whether the houses are masked or, the exact opposite, unmasked.

Little wonder then that the issue of sincerity – and consequently that of the genuine self – is constantly evoked by the narrator. Leading finally to Serra’s painful short-circuit are two contradictory impulses. Envisioning the self as unitary, integral, simple, Serra yearns for the comfort of that one-to-one equivalence, a “*‘eu próprio’ que me ofereceria segurança*” (104). It is in this sense, for instance, that he praises Sombra’s “*simplicidade natural*” at the end of the book. On the other hand, feeling himself constrained and impoverished by the strictures of that simple, singular self, he becomes, in the words of Casais Monteiro, “*um carrasco psicológico de si próprio*” (Monteiro, 331). Unable to solve this contradiction Serra is condemned to self-conscious posturing. Ill-at-ease, he is “on stage” even when alone:

Eu seria agora feliz..., – se me não preocupasse com sentir-me feliz. Por isso havia exibicionismo e não sei quê de forçado, de postiço, nos meus semi-sorrisos parvos para as árvores, ou no meu ar de beatitude ante a claridade do céu. (38)

But it is in social interactions when that self must be projected outward that the issue is dramatized, for in the absence of a spontaneous “*simplicidade natural*” (85), an “*eu próprio*” (104), an elaborate presentation of a fabricated, non-spontaneous self must be created and maintained. Serra, however, is too self conscious. What is highlighted in those moments is the “*aracnídeas arquiteturas*” (42) which sustain (but ultimately undermine), the exterior presentation of self.

Before meeting Franco it is with one of his friends, Luís Afonso, that this difficulty is most apparent. Serra would have us believe that the fault lies with Luís Afonso: a suspicious friend who polices the comments of those around him for supposed offences to his *amour propre*. Nevertheless, it is Serra’s own defensiveness in relation to Luís Afonso that is revealed:

Sentando-me a seu lado (nem sempre me sentia à vontade face a face com ele) inquiri... (38)

– Foi uma impressão... – murmurei perturbando-me sob o olhar perscrutador do Luís Afonso. E tive uns minutos de mal-estar, como se me escapara uma indicação perigosa sobre mim próprio. (39)

Eu perguntava a mim próprio se a minha emoção lhe passara despercebida. Mas parecia-me antes que Luís Afonso a notara; e com tanto mais interesse quanto fingia não a ter notado. (39-40)

It is important to observe that, as the last example makes clear, we have only the narrator's sense of what is going on inside of Luís Afonso: "*parecia-me*". But the reader becomes increasingly aware of Serra's own turbulent internal dynamic (hesitation, aggressiveness, paranoia), as well as his attempts to control or disguise these emotions behind the "postiga amabilidade" (360) of a social mask. Thus, one can well imagine that Serra indeed projects unto others his own entangled posturing.

The uneasy artificiality which he cannot escape is made explicit in many instances throughout the novel. Anticipating, for instance, the meeting of the *Grupo* with Franco he prepares himself as if for a role, selecting or discarding the face with which he will appear in public:

Por espírito de reacção e desconfiança, lembrei-me então de nem aparecer no Olaio. Pensei, depois, em tratar o novo conhecido com uma diferença gélida. Mas um fino ar de ironia discreta, cortês – por isso mesmo mais desconcertante –, pareceu-me de efeito certo. Várias frases me ocorriam já... Surpreendi-me diante do espelho, com a mão estendida e os lábios franzidos num sorriso intencional. (53)

But as if struck with stage fright, he is too self-conscious to perform well when the curtain rises:

Avancei, mas sem naturalidade. Tinha a nebulosa impressão de pisar num palco, e de sentir em mim os olhos de todo um público. (53)

Precisely in the moments when the self, theatrical and contrived, meets the public eye, his own painful "sem naturalidade" surfaces to paralyze him. A successful actor must speak with sincerity no matter the mask. Serra cannot.

In *Sincerity and Authenticity* Lionel Trilling chronicles the shift in the moral life of western culture indicated by the fortunes of the two terms in his title. The distinction is of some interest in the reading of *Jogo*. What Trilling highlights in sincerity is the mediation between self and society. Sincerity, he claims, moves outward, attempting to impose a high "degree of congruence between feeling and avowal" (Trilling, 7).

Less concerned with mediation between self and society, authenticity suggests "a more strenuous moral experience than 'sincerity' does, a more exigent conception of the self and of what being true to it consists in, a wider reference to the universe and man's place in it, and a less acceptant and genial view of the social circumstances of life" (Trilling, 11). And it is precisely this "more exigent conception of the self" which Franco will embody in the novel.

In tracing the fortune of sincerity and authenticity, Trilling pays particular attention to Diderot whose writing, in Leslie Fiedler's words, represents "a first real awareness that man is double to the final depths of his soul, the prey of conflicting psyches both equally himself" (Fiedler, 130). Trilling's focus is on the dialogue *Rameau's Nephew*, and, more to the point, on Hegel's use of the two interlocutors as models for two types of consciousness: what Hegel calls the Honest Soul (Diderot), and the Disintegrated Consciousness (Rameau's Nephew).¹ Hegel intends no praise, however, in his use of the term "Honest Soul" or "Honest Consciousness." On the contrary: in delineating the absolutist morality and the adherence to social rules on the part of the Honest Soul, Hegel suggests (in terms echoed by Jaime Franco), limitation and impoverishment.

It is the Nephew who, representing disintegrated consciousness, (like Franco), is less concerned with that "congruence between feeling and avowal" (Trilling, 7), whom Hegel praises. The dialogue suggests that, precisely as Franco makes clear to Serra, "moral judgement is not ultimate, man's nature and destiny are not wholly comprehended within the narrow space between virtue and vice" (Trilling, 32). In Serra's case, the constraints and sacrifices self-imposed by his attempt to restrict the self to "a simplicidade natural" to which it is clearly not suited is explicitly revealed later in the novel. The passage bears quoting in full for it represents a moment when Serra finally perceives with great clarity the labyrinth which encarcerates him:

[D]iante de mim, havia só dois caminhos palpáveis: Obedecer, sacrificando vários dos meus impulsos ou aspirações a leis e costumes que eles diziam não só necessários à felicidade da vida dos homens uns com os outros à face da terra como também naturalmente aceites pelo coração, a carne e a razão desses mesmos homens; desobedecer, sacrificando à satisfação de tais meus impulsos ou aspirações aquela parte que a minha desobediência pudesse atingir da felicidade e humanidade dos homens uns com os outros à face da terra. No primeiro caso, obedecendo eu seria infeliz (pois incompleto) pela insatisfação dos meus instintos esmagados. Mas poderia ser feliz na aparência, (e uma aparência de felicidade já é certa felicidade) além de que poderia alcançar uma alta posição social... Tal reputação elevar-me-ia a meus próprios olhos: ainda que só erguida sobre aparências. (Só sobre aparências? Não!: Reconheci depois que dominar os meus impulsos anti-sociais era também uma tendência minha. ...). (356)

It is significant, however, that this insight comes late in the novel in a curious text within a text entitled "'Discours de la methode' ou as pseudo-memórias incompletas de Jaime Franco" which combines and conflates the biographies of Franco and Serra. Serra and Franco indeed dramatize the two concepts of self delineated above. Serra represents here the Honest Soul, al-

¹ The discussion is to be found in *Phenomenology of Mind*. As Trilling points out in a footnote, Hegel alludes to *Rameau's Nephew* but "at no point in his comment on the dialogue does Hegel mention either its title or the names of its author and its protagonists. In Baillie's translation [J. B. Baillie, trans. London: 1949] the work to which Hegel refers is identified in an editorial footnote."

beit a tortured one, held in the straight-jacket imposed by his quest for a coherent, integral self. Franco represents the Desintegrated Consciousness, relishing in a more amorphous, amoral and multiple model of self, playing true only to the contradictory moments of a protean identity. It is thus Franco, for example, who earlier in the novel had proposed in terms Rameau's nephew would no doubt approve,

a ilimitação da personalidade, a dispersão do eu cerrado em si. O homem poderá então compreender e compreender-se. Cada um poderá então ser o que é, ser o que são os outros, ser em cada momento o que em cada momento é, e contradizer-se de palavra para palavra, de gesto para gesto, mantendo no entanto a sua admirável unidade. (95)

It is no coincidence, then, that the first meeting of the *Grupo* with Jaime Franco will be occupied with a long discussion on irony, for the issue is directly linked to the two modes of self discussed above. Two views of irony are being proposed. Luís Afonso, and, after him, Serra, defend a traditional or rhetorical view of irony: one says the opposite of one's opinion: "A ironia – dizia Luís Afonso – exige um *parti-pris*: quando ironicamente digo uma gentileza, digo-a com o prejuízo de que uma gentileza sincera não fora merecida... Eis o que faz da minha gentileza uma ironia" (p. 56). Jaime Franco disagrees and offers a different view of irony: "A ironia de que falo é outra: É uma tentativa de se exprimir atitudes opostas, faces adversas, juízos desencontrados, sentimentos complexos – com palavras que aparentemente, isto é, superficialmente só têm um sentido" (57). Serra doubts whether Franco is describing irony proper and argues that "ao contrário do seu ironista ideal, os ironistas são hábeis em isolar um aspecto, em só aceitar um lado..." (57). The conversation trails away from the subject and sometime later Franco takes his leave and the *Grupo* disperses.

At first glance this debate on irony seems to serve no other purpose than to lay bare the intricate, tortuous sensibility of Serra examined above. But irony plays a fundamental role in this decidedly non-ironical novel. Especially as defined by Franco, irony is fundamentally connected to the issue of identity and of sincerity.

The debate between Franco and the *Grupo* is familiar to theoretical discussion of irony. While Luís Afonso and his friends defend what is often called "Traditional Irony", Franco expounds what is usually termed "Romantic or Modern Irony." Defining traditional irony, Lillian Furst, in *Fictions of Romantic Irony*, states:

Traditional irony is an irony of discrimination that springs from the security of knowledge held with assurance. Buttressed by faith in the existence of truths and absolute standards, it is an expression of moral judgement as well as of social values. . . . His [the traditional ironist] confidence in his knowledge is rooted in the solidity of the ethical framework and in the widespread acceptance of norms held to be sound. His world possesses the coherence of firm contours, and he himself maintains a steady perspective on it; in saying the opposite to what he means, he knows what he means, and what he wants to attain. . . . [T]he traditional ironist uses irony as a means of skeptical evaluation and as a weapon for clarification, seeking to

elicit and establish the truth by an argumentation *per contrarium*. ... Beneath his ambiguities and equivocations, the traditional ironist aspires to an affirmation of certainty. (227-228)

Romantic irony, in its turn, is described by Furst as being

less a pursuit of enlightenment than an assent to, indeed an affirmation of continuing doubt. For romantic irony is an irony of uncertainty, bent primarily on the perplexities of searching. Alert to the plurality of all meaning and the relativity of every position, the romantic ironist probes an open-ended series of contradictions which bound into a chaos of contingencies instead of coming to rest in a state of resolution or comprehension. (Furst, 228)

The second discussion of irony in *Jogo* comes near the end of the novel in the text within a text, "*Discours de la Methode*." These pseudo-memories make explicit the dilemma of Serra who still believes he must opt between the "dois caminhos possíveis" both of which would presuppose the sacrifice of some essential facet of self. It is towards the end of the "Discours" that Serra posits the possibility of irony as a strategy that would obviate the need to choose. Irony, romantic irony, becomes here an answer to Serra's desire to "conciliar o inconciliável". Armed with this irony Serra interrupts his "biography" with resolve and optimism:

Eu tinha, enfim, uma base sobre a qual assentar a vida que recomeçava diante dos outros, com um à-vontade que fora sempre o meu sonho. ... Heróico, cínico, ou vulgarmente amoral, – saberia, agora, conduzir-me com aquela astúcia que permite a qualquer homem inteligente afrontar, sem ser vencido, os sagrados princípios do homem social e humano. Saber, enfim, fazer de mim aquele Super-Homem que sonhava... Por isso me propus um modelo de Super-Homem sobre essa compreensão, a que chegara da *Ironia*. (389)

Irony, it should be noted, no longer a rhetorical trope but a philosophical stance.

How closely the question of irony dovetails with the issue of identity can be seen when we note how the two types of consciousness suggested by Hegel (embodied, I have argued, in *Jogo* by Serra and Franco), are closely related to the two types of irony discussed. Indeed, the two types of irony presuppose two philosophical stances already implicit in Hegel's "Honest Soul" and "Disintegrated Consciousness" typology. Traditional irony is the Honest Soul's rhetorical tool as it attempts to discern "absolute standards" and express "moral judgement as well as social values" (Furst, 227). Romantic irony, on the other hand, allows the Disintegrated Consciousness to remain "alert to the plurality of all meaning [and of selves, we could add] and the relativity of every position" (Furst, 228).

Despite Serra's resolve at the end of his "pseudo memórias" to liberate himself from the strictures of a coherently structured self, he is, in fact, unable to do so. He is still drawn, it seems, to that "simplicidade natural" (the oppo-

site of the ironic stance he proposes), and under the strain he suffers a breakdown. Despite his earlier resolve, Serra fails. His failure can be understood in terms Trilling applies to another tortured "Honest Soul," Goethe's Werther:

If we try to explain his [Werther's] failure in the terms of Hegel's celebration of Rameau, we can say that his alienation did not proceed far enough: he was not able to achieve that detachment from himself which for Hegel constitutes Rameau's triumph and significance. ... To the end and even in his defeat he held fast to the image of a one true self. This tenacity is what destroyed him. A disintegrated consciousness, he had persisted in clinging to the simplicity of the honest soul. (Trilling, 32)

It is important that however sulphurous Franco may appear he not be cast as a devil-like figure who appears on the scene to bring disarray to the ordered house of the self. To see Franco as a devil, as he himself suggests, is to place Serra's dilemma outside him. Indeed, whatever other function Franco might have in the novel, he represents Serra's double, embodying those volatile qualities which in Serra are repressed: at home with contradiction, with relatives rather than absolutes. This is, in fact, the basis for those "subterrâneas aproximações" that Serra felt on the first night he saw Franco. As Casais Monteiro points out, Franco "não é 'uma pessoa' mas uma espécie de *duplo* que vive uma das vidas que existem como possibilidade em Pedro Serra . . . espelho de um dos seus *eus* que jazem imersos na obscuridade da sua vida em potência" (Monteiro, 331). Serra himself perceives this relationship of alterity when he concedes that Franco "representava também a minha personalidade. Ele vivia a minha personalidade que ainda não pudera ser vivida, e por isso estrebuchava consigo própria" (155).

The relationship of alterity between Serra and Franco which I have delineated above is reproduced by other *Presencistas*: that is, in several texts a primary character, more or less unstable, falls under the sway of another whom at first he disavows. Nevertheless it soon becomes clear that the second character stands in a relation of alterity towards the first. Through meeting this Other, a hidden or repressed side of the character is revealed if not to him, the protagonist, certainly to the reader. A dramatic change of behaviour takes place and the primary character assumes, at least temporarily, the characteristics of the Other.

The relationship of alterity is present in Gaspar Simões's *Elói* in the form of Inácio and Elói. After striking his boss, Elói is taken to prison where he meets Inácio, his cellmate. The bizarre Inácio reveals to Elói how he had been betrayed by his own father and wife. It is interesting to note that Inácio's function in the text is to underline, to reveal (to the reader if not to Elói), the other Elói, the repressed Elói referred to in the book as the "Elói por barbear." It is Inácio that will foreground the Oedipal drama that Elói re-enacts with Manuela and Caetano. The dynamic between these two is similar to that we have seen in *Jogo*. Elói at first will insist on the distance that separates him from Inácio: "Que influência? Influência porquê? Que relações poderão existir entre Inácio e Elói? Inácio é um bandido! Elói um homen honesto, incapaz de arruinar seja quem for" (Simões, *Elói*, 74). In reality, Inácio is, in structural

terms, Elói himself. Like Franco, Inácio (or the repressed characteristics of Elói that are dramatized in the text under the name of Inácio), begins to gain ascendancy over Elói: Elói “sente-se penetrado de uma energia nova. Efectivamente, deve ser aquilo a vingança” (Simões, *Elói*, 64). Later, already fully transformed, he feels “uma excitação momentânea. Apetece-lhe arrombar as grades da cela e partir a satisfazer sem demora os seus desejos de vingança. . . . Inácio transmitiu-lhe uma energia ignorada” (Simões, *Elói*, 74). In a manner analogous to the one I suggest is at work in *Jogo*, Inácio, by making explicit the Oedipal drama, reveals Elói’s otherness, continually repressed in the public Elói, the “Elói barbeado.”

Other characters reproducing this structure of alterity are found in *O Barão* by Branquinho da Fonseca. The dynamic through which this relation is uncovered is a gradual and insistent transformation of the Inspector. Characteristics first represented by the archetypal figure of the baron slowly surface in the narrator. Inspector and Baron, seen as polar opposites when they first meet, are by the end of the text seen to be in reality one and the same as the pronouns in the final paragraph make clear:

Sim, Barão! Hei de voltar, um dia. E havemos de tornar a perder-nos pelos caminhos sombrios do nosso sonho e da nossa loucura; e mais uma vez havemos de cantar as estrelas e dar a vida para ires depor outro botão de rosa na alta janela da tua Bela- Adormecida. (79)

In both *Elói* and *O Barão* the dynamic is identical to the one in *Jogo da Cabra Cega*: Serra is faced at the outset of the book with a bizarre character who gains sway over him, eventually allowing a repressed alterity to surface. As was the case in the other two novels mentioned, Serra begins by denying any identity between him and the Other: “Essa figura incontestavelmente elegante parecia-me duma estranheza equívoca.” But soon after he senses the true relationship: “eu principiara de desconfiar de subterrâneas aproximações entre nós.” Unlike what occurs in *O Barão* or in *Elói*, Franco’s structural significance, that of representing the alterity of Serra, becomes explicit: “coisa estranha! – a sua *Presença* também me parecia como que um prolongamento da minha” (15). Even clearer:

Mas voltei-me sobressaltado; e ria como se quisesse, rindo de mim, atenuar a impressão de ridículo de alguém que me escutara... Ora esse *alguém* era ainda eu. E repentinamente, voltando-se tive a sensação pavorosa dum desdobramento físico. O mais terrível é que, como nos sonhos, o *outro* era simultaneamente eu próprio e Jaime Franco (146).

As occurs in the other *Presença* texts, Serra’s identity begins then to blur with that of Franco himself. In structural terms then, the relationship of alterity between protagonist and the stranger he meets is identical in all three texts.

In ending, I would observe that in all three texts the relationship between the two characters (Elói/Inácio, Serra/Franco, Inspector/Barão), is underscored by a moment of ritual or ceremony. As Elói is taking leave of Inácio, the latter seals their common identity with a kiss:

A sua mão está presa nas de Inácio. Sente-o estremecer. De súbito, encontra-se enleado nos braços dele. O desconhecido puxa-o para si com uma energia convulsa. Elói quer evitá-lo mas não pode. Sente que a boca do outro procura a sua. Num repelão, Inácio esmaga-lhe os lábios – beija-o sofregamente. (Simões, *Elói*, 76)

This ceremonial dimension is perhaps most developed in “O Barão” when one considers the references to communion (the passing around of bread and wine to the musicians in the Tuna), or to “baptism”:

Chamou um criado, que lhe trouxe um grande garrafão, e, levantando-o ao alto, começou lentamente a despejar sobre a cabeça uma cascata de vinho branco que me fazia inveja. ...E comecei a rir às gargalhadas, com o exagero dum completo desmoroar de todas as minhas limitações e preconceitos. ...Baixou-se sobre mim, pegou-me por um braço e levantou-me do chão como se eu fosse um boneco de papel. E colado ao fato dele, lustroso e molhado, que exalava um cheiro forte a vinho, fiquei em pé, a ouvi-lo dizer:

– Estou purificado!...

– Pois estás...

– O baptismo purifica!...

– Pois purifica. (Fonseca, 50-51)

It is, significantly, immediately after this ceremony that the baron invites the inspector to go with him to the castle of the “Bela-Adormecida.”

In *Jogo*, on the first occasion that he meets Franco by himself, Serra feels as if Franco has drawn him into a pact:

Então, levantando o cálice, Jaime soergueu o busto e dobrou-se para mim sobre a mesa. Espantado, e sem saber como, estendi o braço erguendo também o cálice na mão trémula. ... Jaime Franco enlaçou o braço no meu, dobrou-o, dobrei o meu, – esgotámos assim as taças. Depois do que, ele atirou a taça ao ar como quem joga uma flor. ... Eu pensava se deveria imitá-lo, quando me veio o arrependimento desta espécie de pacto a que ele me arrastara nem eu saberia dizer como. (92)

As Eduardo Lourenço pointed out, the writers of *Presença* shifted away from the ontological questions posed by *Orpheu* towards an examination of the “aracnídeas arquiteturas” (104) of self, constructed along traditional psychological [Freudian] lines. Lourenço goes further. He believes *Presença* tamed the revolutionary thrust of the first wave of Portuguese modernism represented by the writers of *Orpheu*. This may be so though one could well question the need for a criteria, implicit throughout his article, that valorizes ontological questions over psychological ones. The debate over Lourenço’s important article is ongoing and I do not wish to address it here. What is important to note is that the shift chronicled by Lourenço allowed Gaspar Simões, Branquinho da Fonseca and others to bring into Portuguese letters a new language. José Régio, considered by many the “chef d’école” of the *Presencistas* was perhaps the most adept at casting the internal dynamics of his protagonists in this new language.

In the case of *Jogo* that language proved to be *too* new and, published in 1934, the book was immediately withdrawn by the censors reappearing in print only in 1963.

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